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OCI No. 1263/66

(57)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
8 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam  
(As of 2:00 P.M.)

1. Various sources have tended to substantiate the Vietnamese government's plan to move forcefully into Da Nang. However, the specific timing of the move is not yet certain. General Vien, chief of the Joint General Staff, has been placed in command of the operation and is reportedly scheduled to arrive at Da Nang Air Base early tomorrow (Vietnam time). Additional troops are apparently already enroute to Da Nang.

2. [redacted]

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[redacted] the antigovernment forces in the city now have under their control 17 M-41 tanks and a number of mortars, in addition to some 3,000 armed youths. Earlier, one regular Vietnamese army battalion and two Ranger companies were reported in the city, apparently under the control of dissident Vietnamese military officers. The loyalties of armored personnel carrier squadrons in the area are not certain.

3. In addition, antigovernment forces are in the process of moving more reinforcements into the city. One company of national police with small arms and Browning automatic rifles left Hue for Da Nang today. Some 120 "student suicide troops," earlier reported to have received two or three days military training, also left Hue for Da Nang this morning. A US air observer reported a convoy of busses and trucks carrying uniformed personnel moving south to Da Nang this afternoon. A VNAF Skyraider fired a smoke rocket at the column, but the rocket missed. The convoy, which later arrived

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in the city of Da Nang, may have been the national police group, the student suicide troops, or additional reinforcements. An earlier report from US military sources stated that one battalion of the Vietnamese First Division in the Hue area was put on alert today for immediate deployment. The recoilless rifle elements of two other battalions in the same regiment were also reported to be on alert today.

4. According to press sources, Buddhist leaders in Saigon today announced the creation of a "Committee of Struggle Against the Government" to be headed by Thich Thien Minh. A recorded statement by Minh, who is the Buddhist Institute's youth commissioner, declared that "we are determined to go on to the bitter end, even if it means bloodshed."

5. The US Embassy reports that elements of the Catholic community, particularly northern refugees, are becoming more restive about the government's inaction in central Vietnam thus far. Vague hints of some kind of action "in the next few days" by a group of northern refugee priests and some sympathetic Vietnamese generals were passed to a US Embassy official today by a Catholic political figure.

6. No further details have yet been received on the demonstrations held this evening in Saigon. The US Embassy has reported that the grenade incidents and the bomb explosion apparently are the work of Viet Cong terrorists taking advantage of the unrest.

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OCI No. 1136/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
8 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam  
(As of 10:00 A.M.)

1. Violence is again underway in the streets of Saigon. Random vehicles and bystanders are reportedly being attacked by roving bands of demonstrators. One American has apparently been shot, and several other Americans have also been injured thus far. A grenade explosion in a refreshment stand located about a mile southwest of Cholon injured eight Americans and three Vietnamese. An explosion near the main gate of Tan Son Nhut airfield has also been reported, but there were no casualties. As yet, details are not available on these incidents.

2. The city of Da Nang is relatively quiet today, although VNAF aircraft continue to fly low over the defensive military positions of antigovernment forces in the city. Two unidentified Vietnamese military officers today delivered to the press center in Da Nang a document signed by some 50 I Corps officers denouncing the Ky government. I Corps commander General Chuan, who apparently did not sign the denunciation, flew from Da Nang to Saigon today to attend a meeting of the military Directorate.

3. According to a late report, a meeting of the military Directorate in Saigon today decided to use necessary force to restore governmental authority in the Da Nang area. General Vien will be in command of the military operation in Da Nang. I Corps commander General Chuan, who attended the meeting today, will not be permitted to return to Da Nang. US military sources have reported that two Vietnamese Ranger battalions are now in the

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process of being airlifted from the Saigon area to Da Nang Air Base in VNAF aircraft. Vietnamese Marines already at the air base will apparently remain there. General Vien, chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff, is to arrive at Da Nang Air Base from Saigon tomorrow morning (Vietnam time). Premier Ky yesterday had asked for US aircraft to transport two Ranger battalions to Da Nang, and then cancelled his request.

4. Elsewhere in I Corps, the Hue radio station has broadcast a denunciation of the forthcoming government-sponsored national political congress and of the Buddhist Institute communique which yesterday called for a temporary cessation of the "struggle" movement. In a private conversation with a US official in Hue, ranking Buddhist monks in the area also declared that they would not abide by the Institute order. Regarding the recent evacuation of American civilians from the Hue area, the monks stated that Buddhists in the area had no intentions of harming Americans or American property. However, they said that "defensive" measures would be taken against the Saigon government until it made a firm commitment to establish a civilian government, withdrew its troops from Da Nang, and granted amnesty to those participating in the struggle movement. A Catholic priest in the Hue area has expressed to US officials the belief of Catholics there that the antigovernment movement is heavily infiltrated by the Viet Cong, and their fear that a Viet Cong takeover is imminent.

5. In Saigon, Vietnamese government officials are preparing a list of those to be invited to the national political congress, now scheduled to be convened sometime next week. The purpose of the congress, which was announced by the government on 3 April, is to obtain a broad consensus on the institutions of an eventual civilian government. Government intentions are to issue invitations today to representatives of each municipal and provincial council, representatives of the sects, political parties, and professions, and to other notables. Minister of Interior Tiet, who is involved in arranging the congress, hopes that between 150 and 200 will attend the meeting, but admits that the major problem facing the government now is to make certain that those invited will agree to participate. Tiet said that

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Buddhist Institute representatives and some individuals actually associated with the struggle movement in central Vietnam would also be invited to attend. Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau boycotted the preliminary consultative session of the congress held earlier this week.

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